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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 004265

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2016  
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SUBJECT: KUWAIT CANCELS PARTICIPATION IN PROLIFERATION  
SECURITY INITIATIVE EXERCISE

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Post learned October 30 that Kuwait has withdrawn from observer participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercise Leading Edge in Bahrain. The decision was not announced publicly. The GOK had previously committed to send three observers to the exercise, two from the Navy and one from the Ministry of Defense (MOD).

¶2. (C) According to U.S. military officers in frequent contact with their Kuwaiti counterparts, the Chief of Kuwait Naval Forces, General Ahmad Yousef Al-Mulla, conveyed the last minute decision not to send the two Naval representatives. The Kuwaiti MOD, upon learning of the General's decision, followed suit and canceled the participation of its representative.

¶3. (C) Comment: The decision followed heavy local and international news coverage of Kuwait's participation in Leading Edge, which was portrayed in the media as an exercise designed to send a message to Tehran. Iran reacted swiftly with strong public statements condemning the exercise. In an October 29 meeting with Ambassador and visiting General Colin Powell, the Amir noted Iranian irritation with the Kuwaitis related to the exercise. Kuwait's decision to withdraw its participation comes just ahead of a planned November 3 visit to Kuwait by the Iranian Foreign Minister. End Comment.

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LeBaron